

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0878
INFO AMEMBASSY BERN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR
SUBJ: CIVAIR: PAN AM CHANGE OF GAUGE

REF: STATE 110037

1. IN VIEW OF OUR INABILITY TO REACH ANYONE ELSE AT SENIOR LEVEL OVER THE MAY DAY WEEKEND (SOUTOU AND FROMENT-MEURICE OUT OF TOWN), MINECON AND CIVIL AIR ATTACHE CARRIED OUT REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS WITH THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CABINET, LECLERCQ. HE WAS GENERALLY FAMILIAR WITH THE ISSUE. HE HAD TAKEN THE PRECAUTION OF INVITING QUAI AVIATION SPECIALIST CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE TO THE MEETING AT 1800 SUNDAY.

2. WE EMPHASIZED THAT WE WERE MAKING THE APPROACH ON BEHALF OF THE AMBASSADOR; STRESSED URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM; AND CONVEYED OTHER POINTS IN REFTEL, PARA TWO, INCLUDING THE POINT ON U.S. COUNTERMEASURES.

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3. CLAUDE-LAFONTAINE REPEATED ARGUMENTATION SHE HAD GIVEN CIVIL AIR ATTACHE FRIDAY (PARIS 13887) AND PREVIOUSLY. SHE STRESSED HER VIEW -- WHICH WE REBUTTED -- THAT THERE HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENT DISCUSSION OF LEGAL AND "ECONOMIC" FACTORS RELATING TO THE DISPUTE.

4. LECLERCQ SAID THAT FRENCH AUTHORITIES WOULD STICK TO THEIR POSITION. THEY CONSIDER THAT, FOR PAN AM TO FLY OTHER THAN 747'S TO AND FROM PARIS, BEFORE THE DIFFERENCE OF INTERPRETATION IS RESOLVED, WOULD REPRESENT A SERIOUS FAIT ACCOMPLI AND PREJUDICE FRENCH CASE. WE COUNTERED WITH RESTATEMENT OF OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO SEE OUR BILATERAL RIGHTS UNDERCUT WHILE THE DIFFERENCE IS BEING SETTLED. LECLERCQ INSISTED THAT, DESPITE OUR PRESENTATION, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY PAN AM WAS SO DETERMINED TO FORCE THE ISSUE BY FLYING 727'S NOW.

5. WE AGREED TO STAY IN TOUCH SINCE, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT HAPPENS ON MAY 1, THERE MUST BE CONTINUING EXCHANGES. HOWEVER, WHEN LECLERCQ SUGGESTED THAT THE FRENCH STILL VIEW THE MATTER AS A "TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE," MINECON REPLIED THAT THE NATURE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S INSTRUCTIONS FROM DEPARTMENT -- AND THE FACT OF OUR UNUSUAL DEMARCHE ON A HOLIDAY -- SHOULD LEAVE NO DOUBT THAT WASHINGTON SEES THE MATTER AS POLITICALLY IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS.

6. NOTE: PAN AM DIRECTOR FOR FRANCE (COMMEAU) ADVISED CIVIL AIR ATTACHE AT 1900 THAT HIS INFORMATION WAS THAT THE FLIGHT WOULD TAKE PLACE ON MAY 1 AS SCHEDULED. HE ALSO INDICATED HE HAD JUST TALKED WITH THE DIRECTOR OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARIS AIRPORTS WHO REMAINS IN TOUCH WITH DGAC UP TO THE LAST MINUTE. HARTMAN

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